

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1                   1.       A method of obtaining content from a remote store using an end  
2 station, the end station and the store being coupled to a processing system, the store storing a  
3 number of content instances and, content details, the content details providing predetermined  
4 information relating to each content instance, the method comprising the steps of:

- 5                   a)       Generating a content request using the end station;  
6                   b)       Transferring the content request to the processing system;  
7                   c)       Causing the processing system to select one or more content instances  
8 in accordance with the received content request;  
9                   d)       Transferring the content details of the selected content instances to the  
10 end station;  
11                   e)       Determining one or more of the content instances to be received;  
12                   f)       Generating a content selection using the end station, the content  
13 selection indicating one or more of the selected content instances; and,  
14                   g)       Transferring the content selection to the processing system;  
15                   h)       Causing the processing system to transfer the content instances to the  
16 end station in accordance with the received selection request.

1                   2.       A method according to claim 1, the method of transferring the content  
2 instances to the end station in response to the received selection further comprising:

- 3                   a)       Determining a cost for providing the content;  
4                   b)       Providing payment details in response to the determined cost;  
5                   c)       Transferring the payment details from the end station to the processing  
6 system;  
7                   d)       Causing the processing system to determine if the payment can be  
8 collected; and,  
9                   e)       Transferring the content instances to the end station in response to a  
10 successful determination.

1                   3.       A method according to claim 2, the method of determining a cost  
2 further comprising:

- 3                   a)       Indicating the intended use of the content; and,  
4                   b)       Determining the cost based on the intended use of the content.

1                   4.     A method according to claim 3, the method further comprising:  
2                   a)     Transferring the indication of the intended use from the end station to  
3 the processing system; and,  
4                   b)     Causing the processing system to:  
5                   i)     Access cost data stored in the store; and,  
6                   ii)    Determine a cost based on the cost data and the intended use of  
7 the content.

1                   5.     A method according claim 1, the method of transferring the content  
2 instances to the end station in response to the received selection further comprising:  
3                   a)     Indicating the intended use of the content;  
4                   b)     Transferring an indication of the intended use from the end station to  
5 the processing system;  
6                   c)     Causing the processing system to generate a licensing agreement based  
7 on the intended use of the content;  
8                   d)     Transferring the license to the end station;  
9                   e)     Determining if the license is acceptable; and,  
10                  f)     Transferring the content instances to the end station in response to a  
11 successful determination.

1                   6.     A method according to claim 1, wherein when the end station is  
2 coupled to the processing system via the Internet, the method of transferring the content to  
3 the end station includes transferring the content:

- 4                   a)     Using a FTP;  
5                   b)     At a predetermined time; or  
6                   c)     Via e-mail.

1                   7.     A method according to claim 1, the content request including one or  
2 more keywords, further comprising:

- 3                   a)     Causing the processing system to parse the keyword(s) to determine  
4 any:  
5                   i)     Misspellings;  
6                   ii)    Synonyms;  
7                   iii)   Semantically non-unique keywords;

8                   b)     In response to a successful determination, causing the processing  
9 system to generate a query, the query requesting clarification of the respective keyword(s);  
10                  c)     Providing a response to the query, the response including either:  
11                    i)     A correctly spelled keyword; or  
12                    ii)    Additional information to clarify the keyword so that the  
13 semantics or the synonym is uniquely identified;  
14                  d)     Transferring the response to the processing system; and,  
15                  e)     Causing the processing system to select content in accordance with the  
16 received response.

1                   8.     A method according to claim 1, the content request including one or  
2 more keywords, the content details including one or more keyword(s) associated with each  
3 content instance, the method of selecting content further comprising causing the processing  
4 system to:

- 5                   a)     Compare the received keyword(s) and the content data; and,
- 6                   b)     Select the content in accordance with the results of the comparison.

1                   9.     A method according to claim 1, the content request including one or  
2 more keywords, the content being classified using a hierarchical classification scheme, and  
3 the content details including one or more category designations representing the categories  
4 within which the content is classified, the method of selecting content further comprising  
5 causing the processing system to:

- 6                   a)     Compare the received keyword(s) to each category in the  
7 classification;
- 8                   b)     Select one or more categories in accordance with the results of the  
9 comparison; and,
- 10                  c)     Select the content from the one or more determined categories.

1                   10.    A method according to claim 1, the content request including one or  
2 more parameter values, the content details including one or more parameter values associated  
3 with each content instance, the method of selecting content further comprising causing the  
4 processing system to:

- 5                   a)     Compare the received parameter value(s) and the content data; and,
- 6                   b)     Select the content in accordance with the results of the comparison.

1 11. A method according to claim 10, the parameter value(s) including a  
2 threshold, the method further comprising causing the processing system to:

3 a) Compare each received parameter value to each parameter value  
4 associated with each content instance;

5 b) Determine the comparison to be successful if difference between the  
6 parameter values is less than the threshold;

7 c) Select the content associated with each parameter value for each  
8 successful comparison.

1 12. A method according to claim 1, the content including any of:

2 a) Images;

3 b) Video sequences; and,

4 c) Audio sequences.

1 13. A method according to claim 12, wherein when the content is an image  
2 or a video sequence, the corresponding content details include at least a proxy image, the  
3 proxy image being a low resolution version of the image or of one of the video sequence  
4 images, the proxy image being transferred to the end station as part of the content details.

1 14. A method according to claim 1, the content being encrypted in  
2 accordance with a predetermined encryption system, to thereby control the access of users to  
3 the data.

1 15. Apparatus for obtaining content from a remote store using an end  
2 station, the apparatus comprising a processing system adapted to:

3 a) Receive a content request from an end station;

4 b) Select one or more content instances in accordance with the received  
5 content request;

6 c) Transfer the content details of the selected content instances to the end  
7 station;

8 d) Receive an indication of one or more of the content instances to be  
9 received;

10 e) Transfer the content instances to the end station in accordance with the  
11 received selection request.

1                   16.    A computer program product comprising computer executable code  
2   that when executed by a suitably programmed processing system, causes the processing  
3   system to:

- 4                   a)    Receive a content request from an end station;
- 5                   b)    Select one or more content instances in accordance with the received  
6   content request;
- 7                   c)    Transfer the content details of the selected content instances to the end  
8   station;
- 9                   d)    Receive an indication of one or more of the content instances to be  
10   received;
- 11                   e)    Transfer the content instances to the end station in accordance with the  
12   received selection request.

1                   17.    A method of processing content for subsequent storage in a store, the  
2   method comprising:

- 3                   a)    Defining one or more keywords;
- 4                   b)    Causing a processing system to:
  - 5                   i)    Receive content instance to be stored;
  - 6                   ii)   Select one or more categories from a hierarchical classification  
7   scheme, in accordance with the selected keyword(s);
  - 8                   iii)   Generate content details, including an indication of the selected  
9   categories; and,
  - 10                   iv)   Store the content instance and the associated content details in  
11   the store.

1                   18.    A method according to claim 17, the method further comprising:

- 2                   a)    Causing the processing system to generate an indication of the selected  
3   categories; and,
- 4                   b)    Allowing a user modify the selected categories.

1                   19.    A method according to claim 17, the store being a database and the  
2   content details forming the meta-data associated with the respective content instance stored in  
3   the database.

1                   20.    A method according to claim 17, the method further comprising:

- 2 a) Causing the processing system to parse the received keyword(s) to  
3 determine any:  
4 i) Misspellings;  
5 ii) Synonyms;  
6 iii) Semantically non-unique keywords;  
7 b) In response to a successful determination, causing the processing  
8 system to generate a query, the query requesting clarification of the respective keyword(s);  
9 c) Providing a response to the query, the response including either:  
10 i) A correctly spelled keyword; or  
11 ii) Additional information to clarify the keyword so that the  
12 semantics or the synonym is uniquely identified;  
13 d) Transferring the response to the processing system.

1 21. A method according to claim 17, the method further comprising:

- 2 a) Defining a number of parameters; and,  
3 b) Setting a parameter value for each content instance for selected ones of  
4 the parameters, the parameter value(s) being stored in the content details for each respective  
5 content instance, the parameter value being searchable to allow content to be located.

1 22. A method according to claim 21, the method further comprising  
2 defining a threshold for selected ones of the parameter value(s), the threshold indicating a  
3 range of values.

1 23. A method according to claim 17, the content including any of:

- 2 a) Images;  
3 b) Video sequences; and,  
4 c) Audio sequences.

1 24. A method according to claim 23, wherein when the content is an image  
2 or a video sequence, the corresponding content details including at least a proxy image, the  
3 proxy image being a low resolution version of the image or of one of the video sequence  
4 images.

1 25. A method according to claim 17, the content being encrypted in  
2 accordance with a predetermined encryption system, to thereby control the access of users to  
3 the data.

26. Apparatus for processing content for subsequent storage in a store, the apparatus comprising a processing system coupled to a store, the processing system including a processor adapted to:

- a) Obtain the content to be stored;
- b) Receive one or more keywords;
- c) Select one or more categories from a hierarchical classification scheme, in accordance with the selected keywords;
- d) Generate content details, including an indication of the selected categories; and,
- e) Store the content instance and the associated content details in the store.

27. A computer program product comprising computer executable code that when executed by a suitably programmed processing system, causes the processing system to:

- a) Obtain the content to be stored;
- b) Receive one or more keywords;
- c) Select one or more categories from a hierarchical classification scheme, in accordance with the selected keywords;
- d) Generate content details, including an indication of the selected categories; and,
- e) Store the content instance and the associated content details in the store.

28. Apparatus for providing content to an end station, the apparatus comprising:

- a) A store for storing:
  - i) A number of content instances; and,
  - ii) Content details, the content details providing predetermined information relating to each content instance; and,
- b) A processing system coupled to the end station, the processing system being adapted to:
  - i) Receive a request for content from the end station;

- 10                    ii)     Select one or more content instances in accordance with the  
11       received content request;  
12                    iii)     Transfer the content details of the selected content instances to  
13       the end station;  
14                    iv)     Receive a content selection from the end station, the content  
15       selection indicating one or more of the selected content instances; and,  
16                    v)     Transferring the content instances to the end station in response  
17       to the received selection request.

1                    29.     Apparatus according to claim 27, wherein the processing system  
2       further comprises:

- 3                    a)     A first processing system coupled to the end station; and,  
4                    b)     A second processing system coupled to the first processing system and  
5       the store.

1                    30.     Apparatus according to claim 29, wherein the first and second  
2       processing systems are coupled via a TCP/IP link.

1                    31.     Apparatus according to claim 29, wherein the first processing system is  
2       adapted to:

- 3                    a)     Receive the content request or content selection from the end station;  
4                    b)     Generate one or more respective marked-up messages in accordance  
5       with the received content request or content selection;  
6                    c)     Transfer the marked-up messages to the second processing system, the  
7       second processing system responding to the content request or content selection to provide  
8       content details or content instances; and,  
9                    d)     Transfer the content details or content instances to the end station.

1                    32.     Apparatus according to claim 31, the marked-up messages being  
2       generated in accordance with an XML protocol.

1                    33.     Apparatus according to claim 29, the first and second processing  
2       system being positioned at different physical locations.

1                    34.     Apparatus according to claim 29, the content including any of:

- 2                    a)     Images;



- 3                   b)     Video sequences; and,
- 4                   c)     Audio sequences.

1                   35.     Apparatus according to claim 34, wherein when the content is an  
2 image or a video sequence, the corresponding content details including at least a proxy  
3 image, the proxy image being a low resolution version of the image or of one of the video  
4 sequence images.

1                   36.     Apparatus according to claim 27, the first processing system forming  
2 part of the end station.

1                   37.     Apparatus according to claim 27, the content being encrypted in  
2 accordance with a predetermined encryption system, to thereby control the access of users to  
3 the data.